



CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL NARRATIVE AND FINANCIAL TABLES

NARRATIVE ~ Project Overview and Details:

Northwestern Counseling & Support Services is requesting approval for the construction of a Child and Family Center on a lot the Agency has purchased across from our main office on Fisher Pond Road. This building will allow the consolidation of the staff working with children and families from three buildings into one. In addition to the efficiencies that will be afforded staff, the new building will allow “one stop shopping” for families seeking our services.

The Childrens Division:

The Childrens staff currently occupy the north end of the building (1400 net square feet or 1,960 gross), which was designed in 1998 for 14 employees with open office space and offices, now houses 25 staff. When these staff leave, this space will be available for expansion for the Outpatient and CRT staff. We currently employ 15 outpatient clinicians in part and full-time positions, and struggle with a six week backlog of clients waiting for therapy appointments. Our ability to add staff and interns to respond to this need is thwarted by our lack of office space.

The Family Center:

The Parent Child Center of Northwestern Vermont (The Family Center) is part of the Childrens Division of the Agency and is located across town in a separate building. This building, purchased from the Fonda Container Corporation, is located in an urban area not well suited to outside playgrounds or outside events for children. The staff (approximately 30 persons) are crowded into an area designed for a dozen fewer people (3,200 nets square feet or 4,493 gross), and the building lacks adequate public and private meeting spaces. Additionally, the Family Center hosts a program for young parents (20) and their babies (15), who are challenged to find sufficient space for classrooms, childcare and a kitchen for meal preparation. The plan is for this building to be sold, staff to be moved to the new center and for the profits to be applied to the building fund.

Developmental Services (DS):

The Agency also occupies space on Lake Road in St. Albans, where the DS staff serve consumers. The Program for Adaptive and Expressive Arts (PAEA) as well as the Childrens team and Seniors will move to the new building to further consolidate services offered to children and families. The staff at this location number 20 in 2,307 net square feet of space (3,230 gross). The Agency leases this space and spent thousands of dollars upgrading the space to meet our staff and consumer needs. The building was sold in the last year and the lease on this building expires June 2008. At that time the new owner wishes to take over the space for his own business office needs.

The new space:

NCSS has designed a family friendly space dedicated to children and their needs. The building will accommodate the needs of our handicapped consumers and will be built to existing ADA standards for access. It will encompass 22,000 square feet in 2 floors and will have adequate private and group meeting space to meet our current needs. It will include a large community kitchen for staff and community events and will provide adequate space (and sound proofing) for the PAEA program. The common area space will also provide for a family resource room, children's waiting room, two conference rooms, a staff mail room, technology file server room, medical records room and various closets for storage. This space amounts to 5,110 square feet net (7,154 gross).

The Childrens teams moving from 107 Fisher Pond Road will occupy space amounting to 3,530 net square feet (4,942 gross) and Team Leaders will be provided private offices. *This amounts to 2,130 additional net square feet of space.* Private offices are not currently provided at 107 Fisher Pond Road, which makes meeting with families and providing supervision to staff difficult. It also puts a strain on the limited meeting space at the main office. We also lack sufficient space for our staff who work in offsite locations to come to the central office to catch up on work and messages. Our case managers lack sufficient private meeting space to meet with kids or to have parent and family meetings.

The Family Center will occupy 4,455 net square feet net (6,237 gross) of space at the new building, which should alleviate the vast majority of space issues they are currently dealing with. *This design provides an additional 1,246 net square feet.* The new design will provide larger classroom and childcare spaces, including an observation room for completing assessments. It will also include a small kitchen and storage area, where our Learning Together students will learn about meal preparation for their young families.

The Developmental Services (DS) teams for Childrens, Seniors and PAEA will have 2,470 net square feet (3,458 gross square feet) of space in the new building and the balance of the teams at Lake Road will move back to 107 Fisher Pond Road to the existing DS suite. Including an additional 300 square feet that will be vacated at 107 when the Director moves to the new building, *the gain will be in the order of 400 square feet, better configured for the specialized services they deliver.*

Project timeline:

If all permits and the Certificate of Approval are in place, the plan is to break ground no later than September 2007. It is expected that the Agency will be able to assume occupancy of the building in September 2008.

Project drawing:

The drawing by our architects, Weimann Lamphere, is included in our application packet.

Project permits:

1. AOT permit renewal ~ expected completion date of 15 June 2007
2. Public water supply permit ~ expected completion date of 15 August 2007
3. Site plan review for Town of St. Albans ~ expected completion date of 28 June 2007
4. Storm water permit ~ expected completion date of 15 September 2007
5. Waste water & potable water supply permit ~ expected completion date of 15 August 2007
6. Construction general permit ~ expected completion date of 15 September 2007

CRITERION I ~ Strategic Plan:

The Agency has recently completed the process of compiling a five year strategic plan, interviewing hundreds of stakeholders, community partners, staff and consumers. The final document is being prepared at this time, but we have included a draft of that document for your review.

The mission of the Agency is “to ensure that the residents of Franklin and Grand Isle Counties have access to quality psychosocial services within their community setting.” Our section on “Project Need” discusses how we feel the new building will enhance the delivery of needed services in a family friendly community setting.

CRITERION II ~ Project Need:

Child and Family Center:

The Agency of Human Services (AHS) has a goal of greater coordination amongst service providers. In our current building structure, service providers are located in multiple settings making streamlined coordination difficult. Co-locating all providers into one setting will allow for greater coordination of services, improved efficiency of service delivery, higher quality services, and ultimately, better outcomes for the consumer. Co-locating service providers will help us to fully operationalize AHS' goal of integrated services.

The Health Resource Allocation Plan (HRAP) has the goal of locating services in or near the most appropriate settings. AHS has the goal of streamlined integration of services. Co-locating NCSS child and family services into one building will achieve both of these goals. Families will be able to travel to one family friendly place where they can receive multiple services from multiple providers. Co-location of resources will decrease the burden families currently face by having to travel to multiple sites to access multiple services. AHS' goal of greater integration will also be achieved by increasing connections and partnerships amongst service providers. Integration has been a challenge due to service providers being scattered across multiple sites. Co-locating providers within a single building will improve integration, efficiencies, and outcomes.

Integrating NCSS children and family services into one building will meet current unmet needs in two ways:

1. We consistently hear from our consumers that they feel a certain level of stigma when they access mental health services. In some families, this sense of stigma was so strong that families have refused to bring their child in for needed services. Our new "Child and Family Center" has been meticulously designed with strong input from families within our community. Through this process, we are confident that the new building will be warm and inviting to those accessing supports.
2. Within our current system, families often are required to travel to multiple settings to receive necessary supports. Families report feeling frustrated and have clearly identified this as a barrier to services. Integrating NCSS child and family services will allow families to come to one place where they can then access multiple services.

Developmental Services (DS):

This new building will allow the services for children to be more cohesive, based on the inclusion of Family Center early childhood services. Family Infant Toddler Program (FITP) and the DS programs for children will all be in the same building, which will ease the challenges that geography has posed to collaboration. Also, the Childrens division and the DS division have developed autism programming in

response to high community need. These programs will be co-located in this new building, which will improve collaboration and prevent duplication of services. Finally, the sensory space will be used for DS clients and the observation room will assist parents with disabilities in developing parenting skills. This alone will provide a tremendous benefit.

CRITERION III ~ Agency Designation:

Copies of our certifications as a Designated Agency for DAIL and VDH are included in the packet.

CRITERION IV ~ Financial Feasibility and Impact Analysis:

The key question for us regarding financial feasibility of constructing this new building has been whether or not the programs that will occupy that building can absorb the increased cost of the space that they will be moving into as opposed to the cost of the space they are in now. There are no new programs that are being created in anticipation of constructing this building. All of these programs are currently housed in either an inadequate amount of space for the current program needs or in rented space that will no longer be rented once the program moves into the new building.

During the past few years we have looked at numerous configurations of programs that could afford to occupy this building. Some programs clearly could not support the additional cost of this new construction and were then eliminated from the list of occupants. Instead, we will be able to house them in existing, less expensive space that will be vacated by programs moving to the new building. Other programs could not really afford the impact of the additional cost, but are an integrated part of other programs going in to the building. After careful analysis it was decided that the additional expense could be absorbed by more financially solvent programs, which would offset the cost to the smaller programs. In the current configuration, we have achieved overall financial feasibility for the integrated group of programs that will be co-located and we will move towards more efficient service delivery.

In addition, numerous drafts of the building's blueprints were generated and reviewed by agency management. The goal was always to look for efficiencies and balance ideal versus realistic program space needs. We believe our current blueprint achieves this balance and is financially feasible for our agency.

Perhaps most importantly, over the past several years the agency and our board of directors have evaluate various alternatives to constructing this building. We have investigated all the rental opportunities of adequate size in the Franklin and Grand Isle counties. We have also investigated the option of purchasing an existing building and renovating it to fit our program needs. It was the executive committee of our board of directors who finally decided it was time to look at constructing our own building, since time is running out on leases of existing space. In response to that, we purchased a lot across from our existing main office, when it became available.

The financial tables included in this application were created based on the best estimates available to us. These estimates are fairly conservative, and barring any unforeseen difficulties or delays it is reasonably certain that the actual costs will not be above what has been projected and may even come in slightly below these projections. Our chosen contractor provided many of the cost estimates on this design-build project and they have extensive experience and expertise. They have done both new construction and renovation projects for our agency in the past and have a proven track record for completing projects on time and within budget.

There is one financial table that requires some clarification. Table 4A: Balance Sheet without the Project was completed by keeping a majority of the balance sheet items the same from year to year. It is very difficult to predict what many items, such as accounts receivable and accounts payable, will be from year to year, and the numbers used are reflective of the year-end balances in recent years. In addition, we did not want to complicate the analysis by making guesses about these balances that may or may not be correct and could confuse the overall financial picture represented by these tables. In holding the balance sheet without the project fairly constant from year to year, the financial impact of the building project only would be easier to ascertain.

CRITERION IV ~ Financial Tables:

The financial tables are included in the packet.